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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FORMER OFFICER OF BRONX ORGANIZATION PLEADS GUILTY
TO FEDERAL PROGRAM FRAUD INVOLVING
FORMER NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

LEV L. DASSIN, the Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, ROSE GILL HEARN, the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), and RONALD J. VERROCHIO, the Inspector-in-Charge of the New York Office of the United States Postal Inspection Service ("USPIS"), announced that LUCIA SANCHEZ -- a former officer of West Bronx Neighborhood Association ("West Bronx"), a not-for-profit organization headquartered in Bronx, New York -- pleaded guilty today in Manhattan federal court to willfully causing the misapplication of federal program funds. The plea was accepted by United States District Judge WILLIAM H. PAULEY III.

According to Count Five of the Superseding Indictment, to which SANCHEZ pleaded guilty, as well as statements made at the guilty plea proceeding:

During 2002 and 2003, SANCHEZ was the Secretary of West Bronx. While serving in that capacity, SANCHEZ submitted false documents on behalf of West Bronx to Pathways for Youth, Inc. ("Pathways"), a Bronx-based not-for-profit organization that received federal funding, to justify payments by Pathways to West Bronx. The documents that SANCHEZ prepared and submitted to Pathways falsely claimed that Pathways' money went towards legitimate expenses. In fact, as SANCHEZ knew, Pathways' money was used to pay the personal expenses of then-State Senator EFRAIN GONZALEZ, JR.

SANCHEZ, 52, of the Bronx, pleaded guilty to one count of federal program fraud. She faces up to ten years in prison at sentencing, currently scheduled for August 21, 2009, before Judge PAULEY.

Mr. DASSIN commended DOI and the USPIS for their

assistance in the investigation.

This case is being prosecuted by the Office's Public Corruption Unit. Assistant United States Attorneys MICHAEL LEVY and PABLO QUIÑONES are in charge of the prosecution.

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